

Dear Chairman Martin:

I'm 70 years old, and I grew up understanding that capitalism meant competition between companies that strove to offer the best service in order to get customers. Companies weren't given government financing. They were expected to make it on their own, to make a success by offering the best service, and getting the most customers.

I now live in an area where I have NO CHOICE! I HAVE to use Comcast if I want cable television service. I don't want to be a customer of Comcast, but if I want to watch t.v., I have to use them, because there is no COMPETITION in my area.

Capitalism, Competition. They go together, or used to, and should, still. Customers should be given a choice. We should not be forced to use a company we don't choose. That isn't the American way.

The internet situation is even more serious. Fortunately, I'm still able to use an internet service provider of my choice, a small, local company, which gives good, personal service. I would HATE to have to deal with Comcast, a big, impersonal company, to meet my internet needs and problems, i.e. tech support! They use tricky and dishonest advertising practices that I object to, such as continually sending me large format, glossy expensive mailings advertising low rates, (but for 3 months only)! They never say on these, what the rates will be when they raise them after the 3 month introductory period. Why this cost? Am I to think that it is not the customer that will pay the costs of all these expensive promotions? My internet service company has NEVER sent me an ad or solicited my business in any way. They were recommended to me by a satisfied customer, a friend of mine who is a computer consultant. They have an ad in the yellow pages. That's it. I've been very happy with their personal, patient help in solving any technical problems I have and helping me, as a relatively new user who is learning the technology. I have friends who have comcast, and they aren't happy with the service. Why perpetuate mediocrity? Why encourage monopolies? Because they aren't good enough to compete? Is that the American way?

I am writing to challenge the Comcast/Time Warner/Adelphia merger (FCC Docket No. 05-192) and the AT&T/BellSouth merger (FCC Docket No. 06-74). Don't allow these companies, which are already giants, to merge!

Getting back to television: When giant corporations control t.v. as they do now, programming suffers. I would say that 90% or so of the programs offered on limited basic cable, which is all I can afford, (as a low income senior) are about violence, crime, and murder. These are not common subjects of experience of the average citizen. They are not good for people to watch. I hate them! One has to wonder why crime, violence, murder, mayhem, and grislyness, is being foisted on an unsuspecting public, who get sucked into these well done, attention-grabbing programs. What is the goal of feeding this input to ordinary citizens? I don't think it is just making money. I think there is an agenda, that serves a larger and more ominous goal.

No longer does t.v. provide, to any extent, but only in rare instances, programming that is enriching, uplifting, informative, or helpful to the citizens of this great country. We used to be offered political, informative programs with dissenting views that citizens need to defend our democracy, on CPB stations. NO more! Now it has been taken over by the powers that be, and programming of this sort has all but disappeared. What used to be supported by listeners and public funds is now in the control of corporations which have an agenda that is counter to the public good. "Spark" is about the only program I find left on the so called "public" television channel, that I care to watch. It's stuffed with old shows that are irrelevant to the challenges that citizens face today, antiques roadshow, and other trivial or worse programming. This is since politically conservative forces and the corporate interests have taken it over. And the major networks, ABC, CBS, NBC, etc., as well as the less major stations are a total loss!

Almost the only thing I watch anymore is C-SPAN, and the local public access channel. I don't want to watch murder and crime shows, blood and gore, or hospital shows, more blood and gore. Why the emphasis on everything negative and horrible? What is the goal here? Why no positive, enriching programming? Not treacle, nobody needs that, but quality shows that enrich and inform in ways that are important to us and help us grow. These shows can be entertaining too. Or how about more quality comedy shows? We haven't had a really good one for a long time. How about some intelligent, biting comedy shows?

In the first place, I don't believe that you should allow these mergers and I beg you not to! The FCC should block these transactions, and that is for sure! But if you go against the public interest, and decide to ok them, you must impose strict conditions to protect free speech and competition under the "public interest standard." If the FCC decides to, unadvisedly, allow either of these mergers, it should require the following conditions:

1. Subscribers must be able to choose from competitive Internet Service Providers ("open access"). The FCC should also ensure that these companies cannot discriminate against any Internet content or rival service and that every service will be treated exactly the same ("Network Neutrality"). The internet works very well. It isn't broken! Don't "break" it by allow unequal access.
2. Companies must be required to sell broadband access separate from video and telephone service, and at the same price ("naked broadband" or "unbundling").
3. Any subscriber must be able to connect any device to the network (such as a Wi-Fi router) that does not harm the network.
4. Take steps to protect public access programming ("PEG"). Cable companies have become less

responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments. Likewise, telecommunications giants — like AT&T — are trying to eliminate the remaining vestiges of effective local oversight and control altogether. Of course they don't want controls, and the reasons are worrisome.

5. Independent programmers must be able to reach subscribers. We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because providers of video service bundle them together. This is why I have only limited basic cable. Even with that, with what I receive, there are only very few channels I actually watch. Ninety % of the programming is not of interest to me, and much of it is in spanish, which I can't understand. I'm glad it's available for the those who need it, but why do I have to buy it? Why can't I choose to purchase programming in which I am interested and can get some good out of? Lots of the programs are also QVC(?)

Just advertising, selling things. These are also useless to me, but they're bundled in the least expensive option I'm offered. I'm really dissatisfied with it.

6. Any company that owns both programming and video systems should be required to provide competitors with access to their regional sports and other programming needed to offer competing services, so consumers will still have real choices. But don't assume all customers are interested in sports. I'm not!

In conclusion, I ask the FCC to consider the interests of the people like me who pay the cable, telephone and broadband bills and watch the programming. Many of us already have enough trouble trying to afford broadband or cable TV. Please don't make it even harder for us to find competitors, or make it easier for Comcast, Time Warner and AT&T to raise prices or block local and independent voices. Especially the latter!